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Running Head: REGULATORY FIT IN NEGOTIATION

Regulatory Fit in Negotiation:  
Effects of “Prevention-Buyer” and “Promotion-Seller” Fit

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### Abstract

We propose that the psychological effects of performing the buyer versus the seller role in a negotiation depend on regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000) with the demands of the role. When the negotiation emphasizes price, buyers want to pay only what is necessary (minimize monetary loss), which fits prevention focus concerns, whereas sellers want to attain as much money as possible (maximize monetary gain), which fits promotion focus concerns. Study 1 used a hypothetical price negotiation and found that planned demand was greater in the focus-role fit conditions (prevention-buyer; promotion-seller) than in the non-fit conditions. In Study 2, a real price negotiation, buyers adopted a non-loss/loss frame whereas sellers adopted a gain/non-gain frame. Negotiators in the focus-role fit conditions subjectively experienced fit, had more demanding opening offers, and, when paired with another negotiator in focus-role fit, impassed more often. Extensions and applications of focus-role fit are discussed.

Keywords: Negotiation; Regulatory Fit; Regulatory Focus; Role; Frame; Demand; Impasse

### Regulatory Fit in Negotiation: Effects of “Prevention-Buyer” and “Promotion-Seller” Fit

A negotiation occurs between two interests, normally represented by separate parties. In a classic two-party negotiation, a buyer and a seller negotiate the purchase/sale of a good or service. Obviously, the buyer and seller roles differ. While there has been research comparing the performance of buyers and sellers (Bazerman, Magliozzi & Neale, 1985; Drake, 2001; Huber & Neale, 1986; Kristensen & Gärling, 1997a; Van Poucke & Buelens, 2002; Weingart, Thompson, Bazerman & Carroll, 1990), few studies have looked at the effects of role assignment on negotiators’ motivational states and their subsequent experience of the negotiation (Cai, Wilson & Drake, 2000; Monga & Zhu, 2005; Neale, Huber & Northcraft, 1987; Schei, Rognes & Mykland, 2006). This relative dearth may be partially explained by the contextualization of the buyer and seller roles. Although there are certainly role effects that are specific to each negotiation scenario, we propose that there are also role effects that are general across negotiations. Specifically, we investigate how a match between assigned negotiator role and personal goal orientation can create regulatory fit.

#### Negotiator Role

In the present research, we chose to look at one class of negotiations—the two-party, price-emphasizing distributive negotiation, a common negotiation scenario both in the real world and in the laboratory (Barry & Friedman, 1998; Blount, Thomas-Hunt & Neale, 1996; Kristensen & Gärling, 1997a, 1997b; Novemsky & Schweitzer, 2004; Van Poucke & Buelens, 2002). Such negotiations about a single, indivisible good or service center on the issue of price—they are *about price* (Higgins, 1998). There are no mutually beneficial trade-offs to expand the negotiation pie; the negotiation is instead about dividing and claiming the pie (Kristensen & Gärling, 1997a; Neale & Bazerman, 1992). Thus, the two negotiators’ outcomes are negatively

correlated (i.e., in conflict) (Neale & Bazerman, 1992). The buyer wants a low price, the seller wants a high price and so the negotiation is a zero-sum game—what one party gains, the other party loses.

Because the only attribute under contention is price, both buyer and seller naturally focus on money (Neale et al., 1987). The buyer is trading money and only money for the receipt of the good or service. The seller is trading the good or service for the receipt of money and only money. Past research suggests that the buyer views the money to be paid as a loss, while the seller sees the money to be received as a gain (Carmon & Ariely, 2000; Monga & Zhu, 2005; Neale et al., 1987; Thaler, 1980). Thus, buyers and sellers frame the negotiation differently. Buyers frame the negotiation in terms of non-losses and losses whereas sellers frame the negotiation in terms of gains and non-gains (Monga & Zhu, 2005; Neale et al., 1987; Schei et al., 2006). The buyer has the goal of losing as little money as possible whereas the seller has the goal of gaining as much money as possible.

Negotiators have two distinct strategies available for contemplating and pursuing negotiation. A vigilant strategy ensures the absence of negative outcomes (non-losses; spending only as much money as necessary). An eager strategy ensures the presence of positive outcomes (gains; receiving as much money as possible). In other words, a vigilant strategy is in the service of minimizing losses while an eager strategy is in the service of maximizing gains (Higgins, 2000). Thus, the buyer's goal of loss-minimization is supported by a vigilant strategy of protecting against overspending, and the seller's goal of gain-maximization is supported by an eager strategy of accomplishing maximum compensation. We propose, then, that in price negotiations, because of their different framings of the negotiation, buyers and sellers prefer different strategies: buyers prefer vigilant means and sellers prefer eager means.

## Regulatory Focus

Regulatory focus theory posits two separate and independent self-regulatory orientations, promotion and prevention (Higgins, 1997; Higgins et al., 2001). A promotion focus emphasizes hopes, accomplishments, and advancement needs. Goals are viewed as ideals. There is a strategic concern with gains (the presence of positives) versus non-gains (the absence of positives). Promotion individuals seek to approach matches to desired end-states. A prevention focus, on the other hand, emphasizes safety, the fulfillment of responsibility, and security needs. Goals are seen as oughts. There is a strategic concern with non-losses (the absence of negatives) versus losses (the presence of negatives). Prevention individuals seek to avoid mismatches to desired end-states. Regulatory focus may be chronic (a personality variable) or momentary (situationally induced).

Each self-regulatory orientation has its own preferred means of goal pursuit (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 1997, 2000). An eager strategy, as mentioned before, ensures the presence of positives (gains) and ensures against the absence of positives (non-gains). A promotion focus and an eager strategy both operate in terms of gains and non-gains, and are especially sensitive to the difference between “0” and “+1” (attainment). A vigilant strategy, again as previously mentioned, ensures the absence of negatives (non-losses) and ensures against the presence of negatives (losses). A prevention focus and a vigilant strategy both operate in terms of non-losses and losses, and are especially sensitive to the difference between “0” and “-1” (maintenance) (Scholer et al., 2008; Higgins, in press). Thus, someone who is chronically or situationally promotion-focused generally prefers an eager strategy, and someone who is chronically or situationally prevention-focused generally prefers a vigilant strategy (Cesario, Grant & Higgins, 2004; Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 2000).

## Regulatory Fit

Regulatory fit occurs when the manner of a person's goal pursuit (i.e., her strategy) sustains that person's orientation to the goal (Higgins, 2000). For example, when someone who frames her goal as maximizing gains is able to use an eager strategy to attain that goal, she is in regulatory fit because her strategy matches her orientation. By contrast, if she frames her goal as maximizing gains but is forced to use a vigilant strategy to attain that goal, she is in a state of regulatory non-fit. The state of regulatory fit intensifies value (Cesario et al., 2004; Higgins, 2000, 2005, 2006; Higgins et al., 2003). When regulatory fit occurs, people feel "right" about their response, whatever that response may be (e.g., attraction or repulsion). This feeling of rightness accentuates people's evaluative responses to what they are doing. To be clear, regulatory fit does not alter the response valence itself; it intensifies the magnitude of the response. If the response is positive, regulatory fit will increase the positivity of the response. However, if the response is negative, regulatory fit will increase the negativity of the response (Cesario et al., 2004; Higgins, 2005, 2006).

### Regulatory Fit in Price Negotiations

We propose that an individual's approach to a negotiation will be influenced by the interaction of the requirements of her assigned negotiator role and her regulatory focus. Specifically, in negotiations emphasizing price, we expect regulatory fit to result from the strategic commonalities between prevention focus and the buyer role and promotion focus and the seller role. Indeed Monga and Zhu (2005) have found evidence that, in price negotiations, buyers relate to their goal pursuit in terms of non-losses and losses (i.e., in a prevention-related manner) and sellers relate to their goal pursuit in terms of gains and non-gains (i.e., in a promotion-related manner). We elaborate on these associations between regulatory focus and

negotiator role by explicitly measuring the regulatory focus orientations of buyers and sellers, and by considering more fully the implications of regulatory fit between focus and role (*focus-role fit*) for motivated cognition in general and strategic inclinations in particular.

A prevention focus and the buyer role share a preference for a vigilant, loss-minimization strategy. A promotion focus and the seller role share a preference for an eager, gain-maximization strategy. Thus, we hypothesize that, when a negotiation emphasizes price, performing the buyer role fits prevention individuals, whereas performing the seller role fits promotion individuals. Prevention buyers and promotion sellers should experience regulatory fit because their role strategies sustain their regulatory focus orientations. Conversely, promotion buyers and prevention sellers should experience non-fit because their role strategies disrupt their regulatory focus orientations. This is the first investigation of regulatory fit and non-fit between negotiators' assigned roles and negotiators' chronic regulatory focus.

### The Present Research

There is evidence that buyers view the negotiation in loss frames while sellers view the negotiation in gain frames (Carmon & Ariely, 2000; Monga & Zhu, 2005; Neale et al., 1987; Schei et al., 2006). However, no one has empirically tested the idea that, when the negotiation emphasizes price, the commonality between having a prevention focus and performing the buyer role or between having a promotion focus and performing the seller role can create a state of regulatory fit. The current studies investigate some implications of there being such a focus-role regulatory fit. In Study 1, we used a hypothetical, price negotiation to test whether, in preparing for an upcoming negotiation, there are higher levels of demand (more extreme prices) in focus-role fit conditions (prevention-buyer; promotion-seller) than in focus-role non-fit conditions (promotion-buyer; prevention-seller). In Study 2, we used a real, price negotiation to test the

assumptions that buyers and sellers adopt different frames of the negotiation and that negotiators in focus-role fit conditions subjectively experience fit. We also extended our investigation of demand to look at outcome measures: opening offer, impasse frequency, and agreement amount.

### STUDY 1

Demanding negotiators achieve better negotiated outcomes (Barry & Friedman, 1998; Donohue, 1981; Galinsky, Leonardelli, Okhuysen & Mussweiler, 2005; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001; Galinsky, Mussweiler & Medvec, 2002; Huber & Neale, 1986, 1987; Van Poucke & Buelens, 2002; White & Neale, 1994). The purpose of Study 1 was to examine whether regulatory fit contributes to negotiators' demand as they prepare for the negotiation. One conceptualization of demand is in terms of what negotiators feel is a fair or "right" price prior to the negotiation even beginning. This price is one that the negotiator feels would be a fair or right outcome. Assuming that all negotiators would like to attain a demanding price, we predicted that, because regulatory fit makes people feel right about what they are doing, participants in focus-role fit (prevention buyers and promotion sellers) would feel right about proposing a demanding right price and so would propose more demanding prices than those in non-fit. We operationalized demand as the average right price selected.

We also investigated the possible impact of two other variables on negotiator demand: regulatory focus and reference price emphasis. Galinsky et al. (2005) found that promotion negotiators made more demanding opening offers than prevention negotiators, which is consistent with promotion negotiators wanting to advance a maximum price (ensure a gain) and prevention negotiators wanting at minimum to avoid an impasse (ensure a non-loss). Thus, we predicted that promotion negotiators would be more demanding than prevention negotiators.



Reference prices may also impact negotiator demand. Reference prices can serve as anchors, away from which negotiators modestly adjust (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). On the basis of previous research on the positive effects of higher negotiator goals (Blount et al., 1996; Huber & Neale, 1986, 1987; Galinsky et al., 2002; Van Poucke & Buelens, 2002; White & Neale, 1994), we hypothesized that negotiators who emphasized a higher reference price (the aspiration price) would be more demanding in terms of what price they believe is right than negotiators who emphasized a less demanding reference price (the walk-away or reservation price). Finally, in line with Galinsky et al.'s (2005) finding that promotion negotiators reported paying more attention to their aspiration price than prevention negotiators, we also explored the possibility that a promotion focus combined with an aspiration emphasis, and perhaps a prevention focus combined with a reservation emphasis, would produce a regulatory fit that would increase demand.

In sum, we hypothesized that demand would have multiple sources: regulatory focus, reference price emphasis, and regulatory fit. Study 1 used a 2 (assigned reference price emphasis condition: reservation price vs. aspiration price) x 2 (measured chronic regulatory focus: prevention focus vs. promotion focus) x 2 (assigned negotiator role: buyer vs. seller) between-participants design.

## Method

### *Participants*

One hundred five Columbia University students participated in this study in return for \$5 compensation or 1 experimental credit towards fulfillment of an introductory psychology course requirement. Twelve participants were excluded for not completing the study or for participation

in an earlier study using the same scenario. The final participant count was 93 students (30 men, 61 women, and 2 participants who did not report gender). There were no effects of gender.

### *Procedure*

Participants arrived in response to flyers or were scheduled using an online experiment sign-up system. Either two or four participants were run during each session to preserve the illusion that participants would be negotiating in dyads. After signing consent forms, participants were told that we were running two short studies, a personality study and a negotiation study. Participants completed the supposed first study by filling out various personality questionnaires, including the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire.

In the supposed second study, the experimenter informed participants that they would be participating in a negotiation study called “Synertech-Dosagen.” The experimenter announced each participant’s randomly assigned partner and role (buyer or seller) before explaining the case details. The experimenter then passed out the case information and the pre-negotiation questionnaires, allowing participants fifteen minutes to read and prepare. Half of the participants were randomly assigned to a reservation price emphasis condition, in which their confidential role information stressed the importance of meeting their reservation price. The other half were assigned to an aspiration price emphasis condition, in which their confidential role information stressed the importance of attaining their aspiration price. This manipulation is explained in greater detail below.

When fifteen minutes had elapsed or all participants finished answering the pre-questionnaires, the experimenter informed participants that the experiment had concluded and explained that the study was investigating pre-negotiation strategies. Participants were asked not

to reveal this confidential information to other potential participants. Participants were then paid or assigned credit, further debriefed, and thanked for their participation.

### *Materials*

#### *Regulatory focus questionnaire*

We measured participants' chronic regulatory focus with the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ; Higgins et al., 2001). Higgins et al. designed the RFQ to obtain a subjective history of participants' prevention success versus promotion success. Achievement motivation theories suggest that individuals approach new tasks with the same strategies that have been previously successful for them. An individual with a subjective history of success with vigilant strategies is inclined to use vigilant strategies in new situations while an individual with a subjective history of success with eager strategies is inclined to use eager strategies (Higgins et al., 2001). The RFQ taps participants' subjective histories by asking eleven questions on five-point scales. An individual who has experienced more success with vigilant strategies will have a higher prevention pride score, and an individual who has experienced more success with eager strategies will have a higher promotion pride score. The prevention pride and promotion pride scales tend to be correlated positively but only slightly so, such that an individual can score high on neither, one, or both scales. The validity and reliability of the RFQ have been previously documented (Grant & Higgins, 2003; Higgins et al., 2001).

#### *Case information*

"Synertech-Dosagen" is a case commonly used in business school negotiation courses. It is adapted from an exercise developed by Leonard Greenhalgh at the Amos Tuck School of Business Administration, Dartmouth College. Synertech and Dosagen are pharmaceutical firms. Dosagen is selling a bio-technology plant that Synertech would like to buy. Price is the main

objective of both buyer and seller. The standard Synertech-Dosagen case was modified to excise extraneous information and to alter the reference prices to create an evenly-divisible \$10 million zone between the reservation price and the aspiration price.

*Reference price emphasis manipulation.* As noted earlier, buyers' and sellers' confidential information was adjusted to emphasize either the reservation price or the aspiration price. Case information was identical across the reservation price emphasis and aspiration price emphasis conditions except for the final two sentences. Buyers (sellers) in the reservation price emphasis condition read that "Although you have full authority to buy (sell) the plant at (for) any price you deem acceptable, you are asked to concentrate on your reservation price. Therefore, during the negotiation, you should focus your efforts on at least meeting your reservation price of \$27 million (\$17 million)." Buyers (sellers) in the aspiration price emphasis condition instead read that "Although you have full authority to buy (sell) the plant at (for) any price you deem acceptable, you are asked to concentrate on your aspiration price. Therefore, during the negotiation, you should focus your efforts on attaining your aspiration price of \$17 million (\$27 million)."

*Pre-negotiation questionnaire dependent measure*

Participants filled out the pre-negotiation questionnaire after reading the case information. The questionnaire began with a reminder that its intent was to help participants prepare for the negotiation. The dependent measure in the pre-negotiation questionnaire asked participants to select the range of prices they considered fair or "right." The range between participants' reservation price (\$27 million for buyers and \$17 million for sellers) and aspiration price (\$17 million for buyers and \$27 million for sellers) was divided into \$.9 million intervals.

Participants checked the appropriate interval(s) to indicate the price(s) they believed to be fair or right.

## Results

### *Computing Regulatory Focus*

Participants' promotion pride and prevention pride were measured independently by the RFQ. To calculate participants' predominant chronic regulatory focus we first subtracted the prevention pride score from the promotion pride score and then performed a zero split on the difference score. Participants whose difference scores were greater than zero were identified as chronically promotion focus and participants whose difference scores were less than or equal to zero were identified as chronically prevention focus. Analyses are based on this zero split on participants' difference scores.

### *Computing Average Price Selected as Right*

A negotiator can express demand by preferring an extreme price over an intermediate price. Thus, we calculated the average price selected as right to gauge participants' level of demand. Because buyers and sellers are on opposing sides of the negotiation, prices have different meanings for buyers versus sellers. A lower price is more demanding for buyers while a higher price is more demanding for sellers. To control for directional effects and to simplify interpretation of the average right price, we created a new variable. We standardized average right price by calculating, separately, the  $z$ -scores of the average right price for buyers and for sellers and then reversing the sign on the  $z$ -scores for the buyers. Thus, for the standardized variable, higher values uniformly indicate a more demanding average right price for all negotiators, whether buyers or sellers. The value of the variable reflects how demanding a negotiator's average fair or right price is compared to other negotiators in that same role.

*Standardized Average Price Selected as Right*

A three-way univariate analysis of variance was conducted—2 (reference price emphasis: reservation price vs. aspiration price) x 2 (chronic regulatory focus: prevention focus vs. promotion focus) x 2 (role: buyer vs. seller)—with the standardized average right price variable as the dependent measure. A statistically significant difference in demand was found for reference price emphasis,  $F(1, 85) = 4.09, p < 0.05$ , reflecting the fact that, as predicted, negotiators in the aspiration price emphasis condition ( $M = 0.30, SD = 0.90$ ) were more demanding than negotiators in the reservation price emphasis condition ( $M = -0.34, SD = 0.99$ ). There was also a statistically significant difference in demand as a function of regulatory focus,  $F(1, 85) = 5.52, p = 0.02$ , reflecting the fact that, again as predicted, chronically promotion negotiators ( $M = 0.13, SD = 0.99$ ) were more demanding than chronically prevention negotiators ( $M = -0.16, SD = 0.98$ ). The interaction of reference price emphasis and regulatory focus was not significant,  $F(1, 85) < 1$ .

Most important for the purpose of this study, the interaction of regulatory focus and negotiator role was statistically significant,  $F(1, 85) = 10.26, p = 0.002$ . As predicted and as shown in Figure 1, prevention buyers ( $M = 0.21, SD = 0.90$ ) were more demanding than promotion buyers ( $M = -0.20, SD = 1.07$ ), whereas promotion sellers ( $M = 0.49, SD = 0.78$ ) were more demanding than prevention sellers ( $M = -0.62, SD = 0.91$ ). Planned contrast tests showed that the difference in means between prevention buyers and promotion buyers was a non-significant trend in the predicted direction,  $t(89) = 1.57, p = 0.12$ , and the difference in means between promotion sellers and prevention sellers was highly significant,  $t(89) = -3.95, p < 0.001$ . Looking at the data in a summary manner, negotiators in the focus-role regulatory fit conditions (prevention-buyer; promotion-seller) were significantly more demanding ( $M = 0.35, SD = 0.84$ )

than negotiators in the regulatory non-fit conditions ( $M = -0.38$ ,  $SD = 1.013$ ),  $F(1, 91) = 14.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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### Discussion

The results of Study 1 support the predicted regulatory focus by negotiator role fit effect on demand during negotiation preparation: prevention buyers and promotion sellers (fit) were more demanding than promotion buyers and prevention sellers (non-fit). The results were also consistent with the predicted greater demand of promotion negotiators than prevention negotiators as well as the predicted greater demand for an aspiration price emphasis than a reservation price emphasis.

Consistent with our proposal, then, Study 1 found that, in a negotiation about price, negotiators with regulatory fit between their regulatory focus orientation and their negotiator role (prevention buyers and promotion sellers) were more demanding in their pricing when preparing for the negotiation than negotiators with a non-fit (promotion buyers and prevention sellers). The advantage of using the Synertech-Dosagen negotiation case is that it is clearly about price. The disadvantage is that it is a hypothetical scenario. For Study 2, we used a real negotiation with binding outcomes.

### STUDY 2

We designed Study 2 to be a real negotiation over a notebook with a Columbia University crest. Heeding the advice of Blount et al. (1996), we chose an object of negotiation that would be familiar, credible, and simple. Hypothetical negotiation scenarios are practical for

laboratory studies, but there are several advantages to using real negotiations. First, using a real negotiation with binding outcomes ensured that our participants took the negotiation seriously and behaved in line with their true preferences. Second, the simplified scenario eliminated most sources of confusion for undergraduate participants with limited negotiation experience, and used monetary amounts (\$1 to \$10 in Study 2 vs. \$17 million to \$27 million in Study 1) more familiar and meaningful to undergraduate participants. Third, the streamlined negotiation increased the emphasis on price. Because there was only one unalterable good to be negotiated, price was the only possible negotiable issue. Fourth, real negotiations with binding outcomes generalize more straightforwardly to real world negotiations; thus, the external validity of our focus-role fit findings was increased. For all of these reasons, we elected to use a real negotiation with binding outcomes for Study 2.

Study 2 additionally improved upon Study 1 by testing two of the assumptions of the focus-role fit model. We designed pre-negotiation questionnaire measures to assess whether buyers and sellers adopted different frames of the negotiation. We expected to find direct evidence for the claim that buyers adopted a non-loss/loss frame whereas sellers adopted a gain/non-gain frame (Carmon & Ariely, 2000; Monga & Zhu, 2005; Neale et al., 1987). We also designed measures to assess whether negotiators in the focus-role fit conditions (prevention-buyer; promotion-seller) had a subjective experience of fit with their randomly assigned roles, as compared to negotiators in the focus-role non-fit conditions (promotion-buyer; prevention-seller).

Study 2 further extended our investigation of focus-role fit by moving beyond negotiation preparation measures. In Study 2, participants negotiated in dyads, which provided us with opening offer data as well as outcome data. Opening offers play an important role in negotiations



and are highly predictive of the final negotiated agreement amount (Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001). Building upon Study 1's findings of increased preparatory demand from negotiators in focus-role fit vs. negotiators in focus-role non-fit, we expected negotiators in focus-role fit to open with more demanding offers than negotiators in focus-role non-fit. We also expected differences in demand to impact outcomes in two ways: impasse frequency and agreement amount. We expected dyads with *both* members in focus-role fit to reach impasses more often than other dyads because when both members of a dyad are demanding an agreement is less likely than if just one member of a dyad is demanding. Lastly, we expected negotiators in focus-role fit who were paired with negotiators in focus-role non-fit to reach agreements that were better for them (or, equivalently, worse for their partners). Study 2 used a 2 (measured chronic regulatory focus: prevention focus vs. promotion focus) x 2 (assigned negotiator role: buyer vs. seller) between-participants design.

## Methods

### *Participants*

One hundred twelve students participated in this study in return for \$8 compensation or 2 experimental credits. Ten participants were excluded from all analyses because they had participated in an earlier version of this study or misinterpreted the experimenter's instructions. An additional 8 participants were excluded from post-negotiation analyses: 4 were paired with excluded participants and 4 did not complete the study. These exclusions resulted in 102 participants (56 women and 46 men) for the individual-level analyses (analyses of pre-negotiation data) and 94 participants (49 women and 45 men) or 47 dyads for the dyadic-level analyses (analyses of negotiation outcomes). There were no effects of gender.

### *Procedure*

Participants arrived in response to flyers or were scheduled using an online experiment sign-up system. In order to form negotiation dyads, either two or four participants were run during each session. Participants signed a consent form before being informed that we were running two short studies, a personality study and a negotiation study. Participants first completed “study 1,” which consisted chiefly of the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire.

The experimenter then explained that “study 2” was a negotiation study. Participants were randomly assigned to pairs and to roles, and were told that they would be negotiating over a notebook with a university crest. Sellers were given a Columbia University notebook and buyers were given \$5 in singles. The experimenter explained that the negotiated outcome, whether impasse or agreement, would be binding and separate from compensation for participation. Outcomes were restricted to range between \$0 and \$10. Any agreement over \$5 would require additional money from the buyer above and beyond her \$5 endowment. (Only one agreement was reached for an amount above \$5, and this was for \$5.75.) The experimenter emphasized the real and binding nature of the negotiation.

Participants were allowed 15 minutes to complete a pre-negotiation questionnaire and prepare for the negotiation. The participants were then paired with their randomly assigned partner and given 15 minutes to negotiate. The experimenter oversaw the enactment of the negotiated outcome, whether impasse or agreement. Participants completed a final post-negotiation questionnaire before being compensated (in addition to whatever outcome they had negotiated), debriefed, and thanked.

### *Materials*

#### *Regulatory focus questionnaire*

We again measured participants' chronic regulatory focus with the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ; Higgins et al., 2001).

#### *Case information*

The buyer was given \$5 whereas the seller was given a notebook bearing a Columbia University crest, an item which was pre-tested for desirability. The actual price of the notebook (\$3.98) was not revealed to either party. The experimenter stressed that the negotiation was real and the negotiated outcome would be binding. Neither buyers nor sellers received any additional role information.

#### *Pre-negotiation questionnaire dependent measures*

Participants filled out the pre-negotiation questionnaire after being given their role materials (\$5 for the buyer and the notebook for the seller). The questionnaire was comprised of a battery of measures designed to assess participants' pre-negotiation attitudes and strategies.

*Negotiator frame.* Five questions assessed how participants framed the upcoming negotiation. Participants were first asked to divide 100 points between two possible approaches to the upcoming negotiation: a chance to create value and a chance to minimize loss. Four Likert-style questions followed to further assess participants' framing of the upcoming negotiation. Participants were asked to rate the extent (1 = *absolutely not* to 7 = *absolutely yes*) to which they viewed the negotiation as a chance to create value, to minimize loss, to attain resources, and to maintain resource.

*Subjective experience of fit.* Three questions assessed participants' experience of fit or non-fit with their randomly assigned roles. Participants were asked to rate to what extent (1 = *absolutely not* to 7 = *absolutely yes*) their roles felt like a good fit, were engaging, and felt "right."

### *Post-negotiation questionnaire dependent measures*

Participants individually completed the post-negotiation questionnaire at the conclusion of their negotiation. The questionnaire asked participants to record information about opening offers (i.e., who opened the negotiation and at what price) and negotiated outcomes (i.e., was an impasse or agreement reached, what were the final offers or agreement amount).

## Results

### *Computing Regulatory Focus*

As in Study 1, participants' promotion pride and prevention pride were measured independently by the RFQ; participants' predominant focus was determined by a zero split on the difference score.

### *Negotiator frame*

A series of univariate analyses of variance were conducted to look at the effect of role (buyer vs. seller) on how participants approached the negotiation. In assigning points between the two negotiation approaches of creating value versus minimizing loss, sellers ( $M = 59.9$ ,  $SD = 18.64$ ) placed more weight on viewing the negotiation in terms of creating value than did buyers ( $M = 50.4$ ,  $SD = 21.11$ ),  $F(1, 99) = 5.86$ ,  $p = .02$ . For the Likert-style measures, the ratings of minimize loss and maintain resources ( $r = .22$ ,  $p = .03$ ) were averaged to create a measure of non-loss/loss framing. Buyers ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) viewed the negotiation using non-loss/loss frames more than sellers ( $M = 3.7$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ),  $F(1, 100) = 7.27$ ,  $p = .008$ , as shown in Figure 2a. Similarly, the ratings of create value and attain resources ( $r = .33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were averaged to create a measure of gain/non-gain framing. Sellers ( $M = 5.0$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) viewed the negotiation using gain/non-gain frames more than buyers ( $M = 4.3$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ),  $F(1, 100) = 6.60$ ,  $p = .01$ , as shown in Figure 2b.

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Insert Figures 2a & b about here

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*Subjective experience of fit*

Because the three measures assessing participants' feelings about their assigned role (role fit, role engagement, and role rightness) were highly intercorrelated (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ ), we created a measure of subjective fit by averaging the three ratings. We then conducted a 2 (chronic regulatory focus: prevention vs. promotion)  $\times$  2 (role: buyer vs. seller) univariate analysis of variance to look at the effect of focus-role fit on subjective fit.

Buyers ( $M = 4.7$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) expressed experiencing more fit than sellers ( $M = 4.3$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ),  $F(1, 98) = 4.68$ ,  $p = .03$ . More importantly, the interaction of regulatory focus and role was significant,  $F(1, 98) = 5.55$ ,  $p = .02$ , as shown in Figure 3. Prevention buyers ( $M = 5.1$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) expressed experiencing more fit than promotion buyers ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ), whereas promotion sellers ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) expressed experiencing more fit than prevention sellers ( $M = 4.0$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ). Planned contrast tests showed that, while the difference in means between prevention buyers and promotion buyers was non-significant in the predicted direction,  $t(98) = 1.41$ ,  $p = 0.16$ , the difference in means between promotion sellers and prevention sellers was significant,  $t(98) = -1.95$ ,  $p = 0.05$ .

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Insert Figure 3 about here

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*Opening offers*

Forty-three dyads provided usable (consistent between the two members of the dyad) data on the opening offer made in their negotiation. To look at the regulatory focus and role of the participant who opened the negotiation (hereafter referred to as the opener), we created two new variables: a dummy-coded variable for the regulatory focus of the opener (prevention focus = 0, promotion focus = 1) and a dummy-coded variable for role of the opener (buyer = 0, seller = 1). Following the same reasoning as in Study 1, we created a standardized opening offer variable to control for directional effects and to simplify interpretation of the opening offer. We separately calculated the  $z$ -scores of opening offers made by buyers and by sellers. The sign was reversed for the  $z$ -scores of the opening offers made by buyers so that, for the standardized measure of opening offer, higher values uniformly indicate a more demanding opening offer for the opener, whether buyer or seller.

We conducted a 2 (opener chronic regulatory focus: prevention vs. promotion)  $\times$  2 (opener role: buyer vs. seller) univariate analysis of variance to look at the effect of focus-role fit on demand of the opening offer. There were no main effects of regulatory focus or role. However, as expected, the interaction of regulatory focus and role was significant,  $F(1, 39) = 4.71, p = .04$ . As shown in Figure 4, prevention buyers ( $M = 0.67, SD = 0.99$ ) were more demanding than promotion buyers ( $M = -0.23, SD = 0.94$ ) whereas promotion sellers ( $M = 0.23, SD = 0.94$ ) were more demanding than prevention sellers ( $M = -0.33, SD = 1.03$ ). Planned contrast tests showed that the difference in means between prevention buyers and promotion buyers was a non-significant trend,  $t(39) = 1.61, p = 0.11$ , and the difference in means between promotion sellers and prevention sellers was non-significant but in the predicted direction,  $t(39) = -1.49, p = .15$ .

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Insert Figure 4 about here

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### *Frequency of impasse*

Forty-seven dyads negotiated to an outcome; of these, 33 reached an agreement and 14 reached an impasse. The outcome type variable was dummy coded 0 for agreement and 1 for impasse. To look at the frequency of impasse for the various dyads, we created a new dyad composition variable. Because our prediction was that dyads with both members in focus-role fit would be more likely to impasse than other dyads, we used a dummy code: 0 for dyads with zero or one member in focus-role fit and 1 for dyads with both members in focus-role fit. We then ran a binary logistic regression with outcome type as the dependent variable and dyad composition as the independent variable. Dyad composition was a marginally significant predictor of outcome type,  $B = 1.39$ ,  $SE = 0.77$ , Wald's  $\chi^2(1, N = 47) = 3.26$ ,  $p = .07$ . An impasse was reached by only 23.7% of dyads with 0 or 1 member in fit, but by 55.6% of dyads with *both* members in fit—more than twice as many.

### *Agreement amount*

In their negotiations over the notebooks, 33 dyads reached an agreement ( $M = \$3.22$ ,  $SD = \$1.00$ , range = \$2.00 - \$5.75). We created a new variable, dyad type, to look at the dyadic combinations of chronic regulatory focus more completely. We coded dyad type 0 for a dyad with a prevention buyer and a prevention seller, 1 for a dyad with a prevention buyer and a promotion seller, 2 for a dyad with a promotion buyer and a promotion seller, and 3 for a dyad with a promotion buyer and a prevention seller. We conducted a univariate analysis of variance to look at the effect of dyad type on agreement amount. Dyad type was not a significant

predictor,  $p = .7$ . Planned contrasts were at similar levels of non-significance. We will explore possible reasons for this finding in the General Discussion.

### Discussion

The results of Study 2 supported our predictions. Buyers and sellers adopted different frames of the negotiation. Buyers viewed the negotiation in terms of non-losses/losses whereas sellers viewed the negotiation in terms of gains/non-gains. Negotiators whose chronic regulatory focus matched their assigned role, and were thus in focus-role fit, experienced a feeling of fit with their randomly assigned roles. Negotiators in focus-role fit who opened had more demanding opening offers than negotiators in focus-role non-fit. In line with the increased demand of negotiators in focus-role fit, dyads with *both* members in fit were more likely to impasse than dyads with one or both members in focus-role non-fit. We did not find an effect on agreement amount (see General Discussion).

Study 2 provides further evidence for regulatory fit from a match between chronic regulatory focus and negotiator role. In a price negotiation, buyers and sellers adopt different frames of the negotiation. These frames match with different regulatory focus orientations. Prevention buyers and promotion sellers experience a better fit with their assigned roles and open with more demanding offers than promotion buyers and prevention sellers. Finally, when two negotiators in focus-role fit negotiate, they are more likely to reach an impasse than any other pairing.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present studies examined for the first time the effects of regulatory fit in a negotiation setting—specifically the effects of regulatory fit between negotiators' chronic prevention or promotion focus and their assigned role as buyer or seller. In Study 1, negotiators



in the focus-role fit conditions (prevention-buyer; promotion-seller) were more demanding in the price they thought fair or right. In Study 2, we found evidence for our assumption that buyers and sellers adopt different frames of the negotiation; in a price negotiation, buyers saw the negotiation in terms of non-losses and losses whereas sellers saw the negotiation in terms of gains and non-gains. Study 2 also provided evidence that negotiators experience focus-role fit; negotiators rated their randomly assigned roles more highly when their chronic regulatory orientation matched their roles (i.e., when they were in focus-role fit). In Study 2, negotiators in the focus-role fit conditions who opened the negotiation had more demanding opening offers. Although there were no effects of focus-role fit on agreement amount, dyads where both members were in focus-role fit were more likely to reach an impasse, compared to other dyad combinations. Across Studies 1 and 2, the findings indicate that focus-role fit negotiators are more demanding than non-fit negotiators throughout the negotiation process.

Our studies are the first to test for regulatory fit effects in negotiation. Monga and Zhu (2005) tested the effect of promotion-related outcome framing and prevention-related outcome framing on the intensity of positive and negative outcomes for buyers versus sellers. Their starting assumption was that, when approaching a monetary transaction, buyers are relatively prevention-focused and sellers are relatively promotion-focused. We agree that, when a negotiation is about price, the role of buyer fits a prevention focus and the role of seller fits a promotion focus, but this does not mean that buyers as individuals have a prevention focus personality and sellers as individuals have a promotion focus personality. Instead, both buyers and sellers as individuals themselves vary in their chronic regulatory focus, and this determines whether there is regulatory fit or not with the assigned role. The negotiation literature dealing with roles has looked at the superior performance of buyers (Bazerman et al., 1985; Huber &

Neale, 1986; Van Poucke & Buelens, 2002), the greater fixed-sum errors of buyers in integrative negotiations (Drake, 2001), reference-price setting by buyers (Kristensen & Gärling, 1997a), and the greater importance of sellers to the negotiation process (Schei et al., 2006; Weingart et al., 1990). Our studies, in contrast, examined the effect of focus-role fit on negotiation planning, process, and outcomes.

Our studies are subject to limitations. We did not find a significant effect of focus-role fit on agreement amount. This may be due in part to the narrow range of outcomes (\$2.00 to \$5.75) and to the small size of our final sample for this analysis (33 dyads who reached an agreement). In addition, we used a zero split on the difference score from the RFQ to determine chronic regulatory focus. A quartile split, which identifies high promotion focus (upper 25%) and high prevention focus (lower 25%), would enable a stronger comparison of negotiators with the two regulatory orientations, but this would necessitate a much larger sample size in order to have enough observations for each type of dyad. Another limitation is that our studies looked only at chronic regulatory focus. In future studies, we plan to induce regulatory focus experimentally (e.g., through regulatory focus priming) to ensure that acute regulatory orientations follow the same patterns of focus-role fit as chronic regulatory orientations.

The present studies establish that focus-role regulatory fit affects negotiation planning, process, and outcomes for negotiations where price is emphasized, causing buyers to adopt a non-loss/loss frame and sellers to adopt a gain/non-gain frame. A crucial next step is to investigate negotiations with emphases other than price. A negotiation with a different emphasis could induce buyers to adopt a gain/non-gain frame and sellers to adopt a non-loss/loss frame. If a negotiation's emphasis caused buyers and sellers to switch frames, we would also expect the conditions of focus-role fit to reverse. If buyers adopt a gain/non-gain frame, they should prefer

an eager strategy and thus match a promotion focus. Similarly, if sellers adopt a non-loss/loss frame, they should prefer a vigilant strategy and thus match a prevention focus. To illustrate, consider a negotiation where price is fixed and quantity is the primary issue. The buyer should be concerned with the gain/non-gain of additional units of the good or service (per fixed price amount) and the seller should be concerned with the non-loss/loss of additional units of the good or service (per fixed price amount). The buyer should now prefer a gain-maximizing eager strategy and the seller should now prefer a loss-minimizing vigilant strategy. In this scenario, focus-role fit is between the buyer role and a promotion focus and between the seller role and a prevention focus. Regulatory fit should still create a feeling of rightness and intensify responses, such as demand. However, the conditions creating fit (promotion-buyer; prevention-seller) and the type of demand (demand in terms of units of the good or service rather than price) will differ. There are also negotiations with multiple issues on the table and no single emphasis. In such cases, the buyer and the seller may see the negotiation as emphasizing different issues and thus negotiate with different issues in mind—perhaps choosing to emphasize those issues whose natural framing in the negotiation provides a fit with their self-regulatory orientation. This is another issue for future research.

It should also be noted that there are other possible sources of regulatory fit besides regulatory focus. Regulatory mode is a promising candidate for regulatory fit in negotiation because matches between regulatory mode and strategy have already been found to produce regulatory fit effects in other domains (e.g., Avnet & Higgins, 2003). Regulatory mode theory (Higgins, Kruglanski & Pierro, 2003) identifies two self-regulatory modes, locomotion and assessment; locomotion is concerned with movement from state to state and matches a “progressive elimination strategy” and assessment is concerned with critical evaluation and

comparison of possible states and matches a “full evaluation strategy” (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). Negotiations could be structured as either a progressive elimination of offers or as a full evaluation of all offers in order to examine fit effects with regulatory mode.

The current studies suggest that, when a negotiation is about price, regulatory fit can increase negotiator demand, which has potential ramifications for the entire negotiation process from planning to outcome (Barry & Friedman, 1998; Donohue, 1981; Galinsky et al., 2005; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001; Galinsky et al., 2002; Huber & Neale, 1986, 1987; Van Poucke & Buelens, 2002; White & Neale, 1994). Notably, regulatory focus is a state variable—it can vary chronically as a personality variable, as in the present studies, and it can be situationally induced via experimental priming or varying task instructions (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 1997, 2000; Higgins et al., 2001, 2003). Examining the regulatory fit effects of such situational induction of buyers’ and sellers’ regulatory focus is an important direction for future research. Additionally, the emphasis of the negotiation (whether price or another issue) can be manipulated. Because it is typically easier to modify the situation or circumstances surrounding a negotiation (both prior to and during the negotiation) rather than selecting for, never mind changing, the personalities of the negotiators, investigating the effects of situational inductions of regulatory fit and of manipulations of a negotiation’s emphasis is important practically as well as theoretically. When one recognizes that cross-organizational and cross-cultural differences involve institutionalized versions of such situational inductions, the practical significance of such research is even more apparent.

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## Figures

Figure 1. The effect of the interaction of chronic regulatory focus and negotiator role on demand, as measured by standardized average right price selected. Error bars show standard errors.

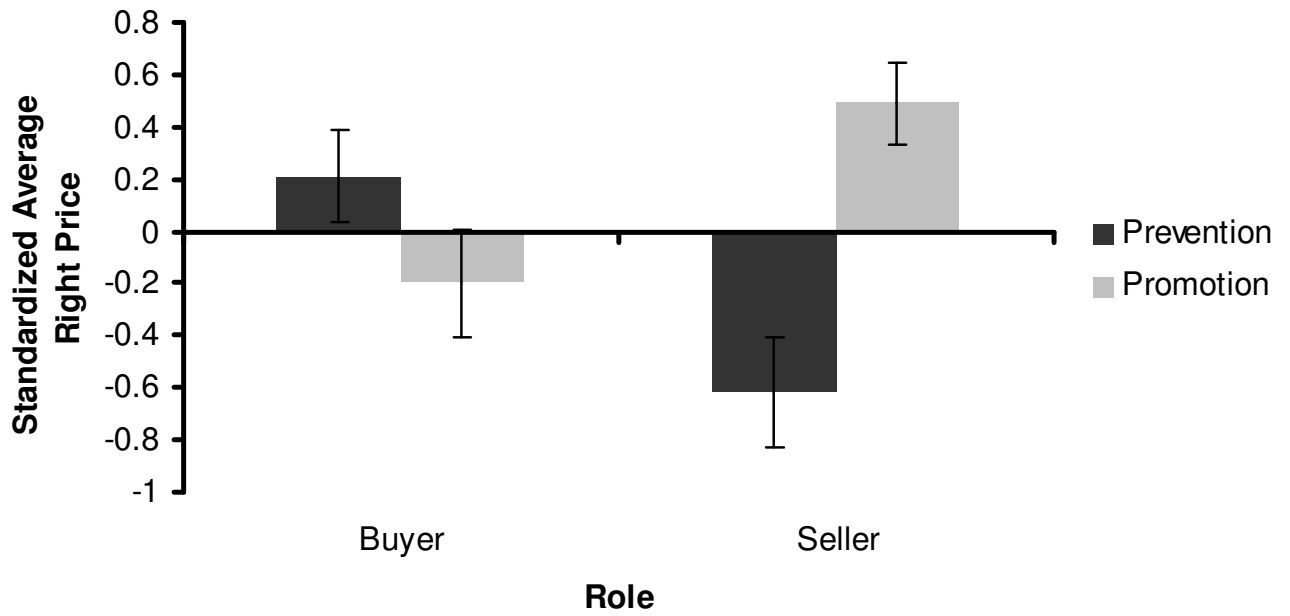


Figure 2. The effect of negotiator role on negotiation framing as measured by the average of ratings of the negotiation: (2a) as a chance to maintain resources and minimize loss; (2b) as a chance to attain resources and create value. Error bars show standard errors.

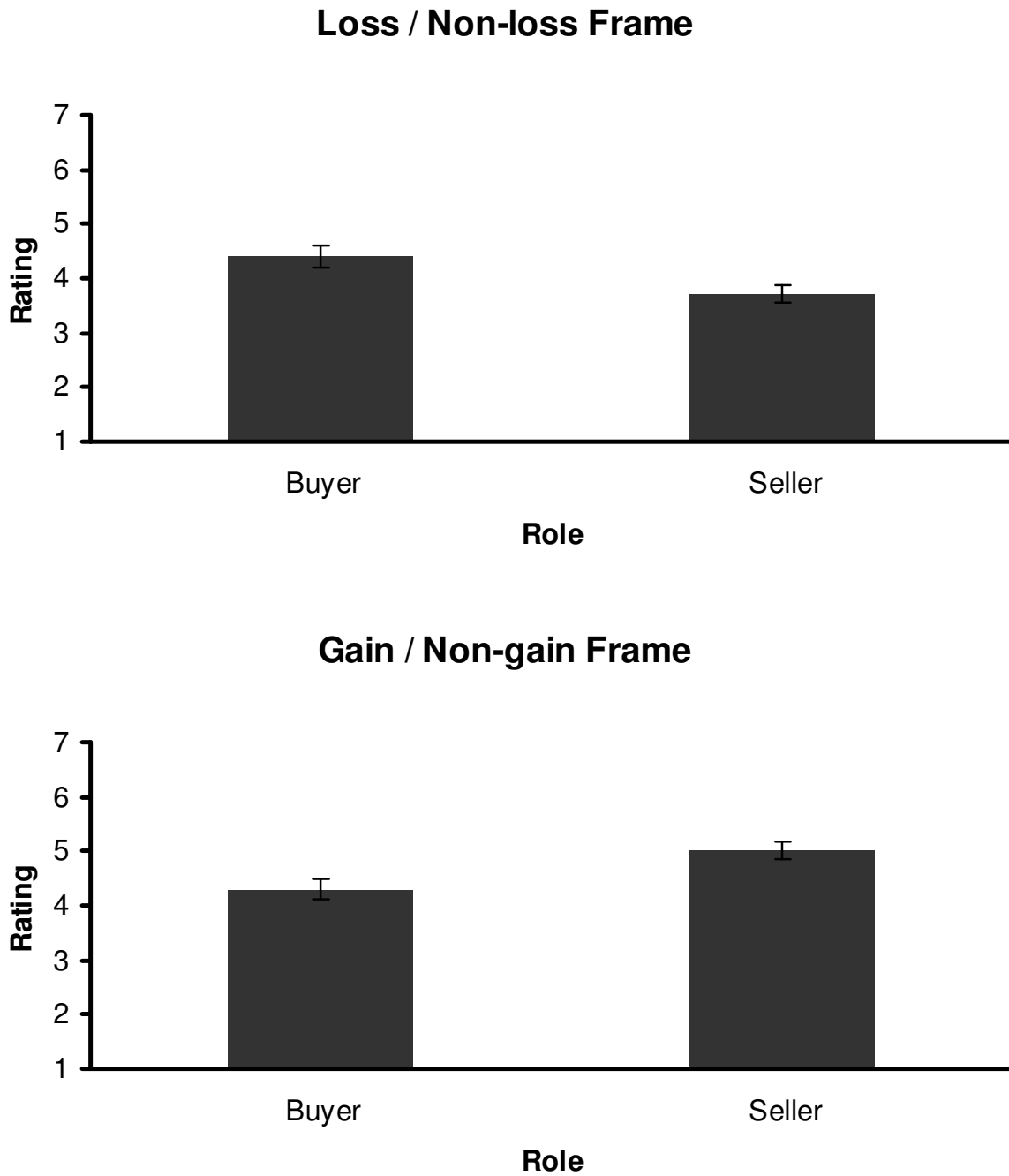


Figure 3. The effect of the interaction of chronic regulatory focus and negotiator role on the subjective experience of role fit, as measured by the average of the ratings of role fit, role engagement, and role rightness. Error bars show standard errors.

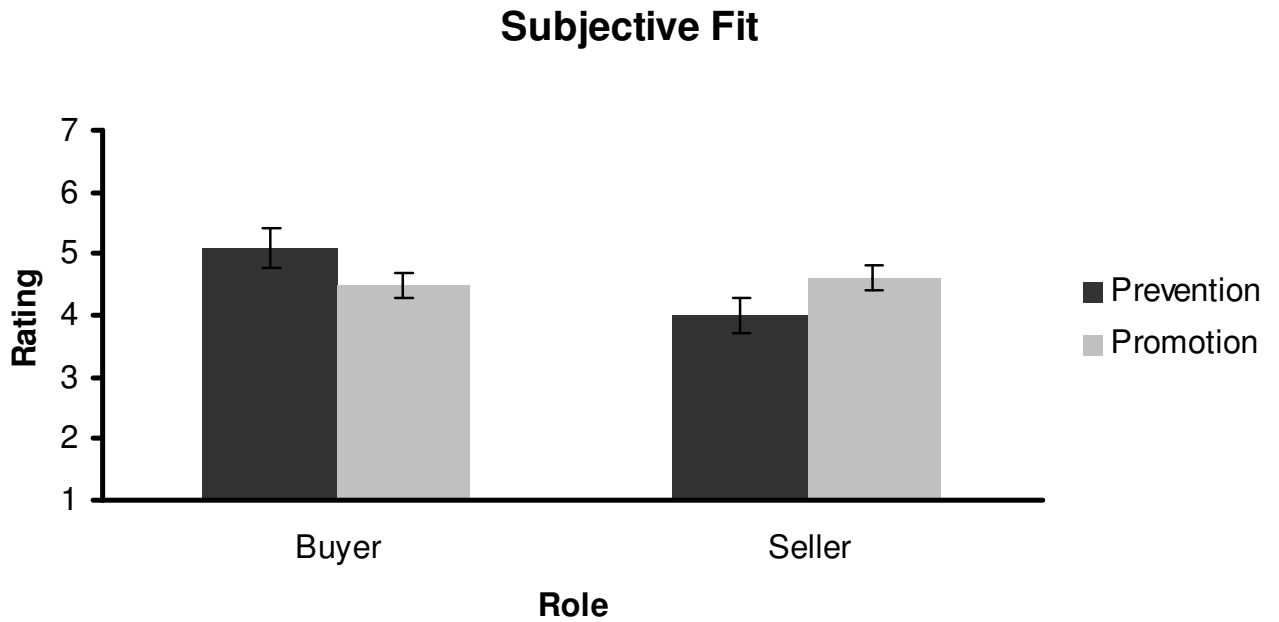


Figure 4. The effect of the interaction of chronic regulatory focus and negotiator role on demand, as measured by standardized opening offer. Error bars show standard errors.

